

Walking Trails at Estill High School Increase Awareness of Cardiovascular Disease

Issue

Children and adults who live in the very small southwestern South Carolina town of Estill in Hampton County are at a high risk of acquiring Cardiovascular Disease (CVD). Indicators that led to the affirmation of this information and the decision to intervene on behalf of the population include:

- The cost of cardiovascular disease in South Carolina is nearly \$1.4 billion in direct costs
- Total population of 21,386, ranking Hampton County 39th of the 46 counties in size
- The rural designation of Estill, as it has a town population of 2,425
- Identification of Estill as a federally designated manpower shortage area
- The fact that 23 percent of Hampton County residents have no health insurance
- Mortality rates for heart disease and stroke are an average of 41 percent higher than the state rates for these diseases
- Hospitalization rates for heart disease, diabetes, stroke and hypertension are all notably higher than the state rates

As a result of these indicators, a portion of the Cardiovascular Health Grant has been designated for the creation of the Estill High School Walking Trails in an effort to increase community awareness and involvement in addressing this critical issue.

Intervention

Thanks in part to Block Grant funds, several health professionals from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and an Estill High School nurse joined forces to plan and implement both indoor and outdoor walking trails for students, teachers, staff, and special medical needs students. Goals were identified to increase awareness and help reduce the risk of CVD, including:

- Increased physical activity
- Increased education and emphasis on daily nutrition habits
- Increased education on creating and maintaining a healthy cardiovascular system
- Community awareness of the signs and symptoms of heart attack, stroke, and diabetes;
- Friends and Family Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) will be taught
- School staff and students will outreach to the community and share their knowledge of CVD and its relation to the concept of a healthy community

Impact

The walking trails were designed, measured, and established, and are being used daily to promote healthy lifestyle behaviors and reduce the risk of CVD. Healthy lifestyle changes are evident throughout the school campus:

- Students, staff and teachers are using both the indoor and outdoor walking trails regularly
- Healthier foods are now being offered in the cafeteria
- Vending machines are stocked with fruit juice and water instead of sodas
- Teachers receive monthly CVD awareness literature for integration into their curriculum
- Students, teachers, and staff are being trained in “Friends and Family” CPR

The Estill High School Walking Trails initiative has already had a clearly positive impact on the Estill community, and increased use will only serve to enhance the benefit to this population.

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